

## Clipping, February 2, 1899

### The Deaf-Mute Voice .

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

Thursday, February 2, 1899.

*California News* : Last Saturday Dr. Alexander Graham Bell spent several hours at the Institution, the guest of Dr. Wilkinson. School was not in session of course and most of the pupils were at their homes, but Dr. Bell found much to interest him, especially as was to be expected in the speech department. On last Monday evening the Starr King Fraternity tendered Dr. Bell a reception at the Unitarian church in Oakland. The Oakland California *Enquirer* gives the following synopsis of the address delivered by him on that occasion:

Upon the conclusion of the formal ceremonies, Dr. Bell, who had been invited to deliver an address, was introduced to the audience by Mrs. Gleason. He said, in part:

"It is with great pleasure that I meet the Starr King Fraternity this evening, and it is also with pleasure that I am to make a short talk to you. Were I to speak upon the subject which interests me most it would be that of the education of the deaf; and were I to speak upon a subject which interests the general public the most, it would that of the telephone. However, I shall combine the two: the telephone grew from my experiment to teach the deaf how to understand and to talk so that they could be understood.

"My father invented a symbol by which deaf mutes could converse, and, finally, I invented an apparatus by which the vibrations of speech could be seen, and it turned out to be a telephone. I concluded that the deaf could be taught to speak. I did not believe in the fallacy that mutes could be taught to understand a person by the movements of the

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lips, and I taught the sign language . My wife is deaf, and I have taught her so that she understands every word I say to her.

“It occurred to me to make a machine that would enable one to hear vibrations. I went to an aurist in Boston, and he advised me to take the human ear as my model. I told him that I would if he would kindly furnish the ear, which he did by supplying me with the ear of a dead man. With this ear I experimented, and upon applying the apparatus I noticed that the dead man's ear wrote down the vibrations .”

Dr. Bell then gave a scientific explanation of sound language, and the mechanism of the instrument, with illustrations on a black-board.

Continuing he said: “I arrived at the conclusion that if I could make iron vibrate on a dead man's ear. I could make an instrument more delicate which would cause these vibrations to be heard and understood. I thought if I placed a delicate piece of steel over an electric magnet, I could get a vibration, and thus the telephone was completed.

“The telephone arose from my attempts to teach the deaf to speak. I was not an inventor. It arose from my knowledge not of electricity, but as a teacher of the deaf. Had I been an electrician I would not have attempted it.

“I have spoken of the telephone. I will now speak of the deaf: The greatest affliction to a child is be born deaf. It is dumb merely because it cannot hear. It knows no word, has no language, because it cannot speak a language that it has not not heard. The child thinks, of course, but of what, we know not. The depth of its ignorance is too great to be realized; it misses all of those mental pleasures so dear to us.

“The fascination in teaching the deaf is to see the great change, the brightening of a dark mind. Once you have got communication with a deaf child, there is nothing you cannot do for it, intellectually, but you can never make it hear. Teachers have concluded that the best

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method of gesture as practised by intelligent mutes and develop it into a language. There are a number of gestures which any intelligent person can understand.

“For fifty years this sign language was used. It is a beautiful language and has accomplished much in the education of the deaf in this country. Now there has arisen a school of teachers who object to the use of the French sign language, and favor the use of English. The English manual should be used, for if the child talks in English he is more likely to think in English.”